



**family  
lives**

# **Our Strategic Plan**

**2019-2021**

# Introduction

We know that vulnerable children often live within lower-income families, but that asking for help as a parent or carer can be one of the hardest things to do. Our strategy recognises the link between early intervention and crisis support, because if we get the first bit right then we can often alleviate a crisis. Our work on the helpline, our advice through the website, and our interventions in the early years are about ensuring the best chance for everyone, regardless of what they are having to cope with.

As a professional volunteer-led organisation we work with families across the country from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, families parenting together or apart, families with disability, families experiencing violence, poverty, low income or who are worried about online bullying and adolescent behaviour. Vulnerability can affect any family and may be most acutely felt at a time of relationship breakdown between a parent and their child or when the family itself breaks down and parents separate.

If individuals are supported before a crisis the outcomes are considerably better, emotional and mental health improves and decisions can be made for the future whether they be about money, relationships within the family or just finding the courage and understanding to start again. Sometimes life can be very challenging, and a range of events can escalate making it all but impossible to cope with a wide range of competing demands – this is where the care and compassion of a conversation over the phone or with one of our community-based team can make all the difference.

We face difficult times over the next few years, as demand for our services grow but resources diminish. We have together with our service users, funders, volunteers and staff consulted widely to see how we can deliver more for less, but also make the most of what we have. Our focus over these next three years will be to provide early intervention and crisis support to more families, to increase our volunteer numbers to meet on-going demand, and also to develop our digital offer to ensure that we are providing the most cost effective and accessible range of services for those who need us.

We look forward to working with you to make this a success.

Jeremy Todd  
CEO

Anastasia de Waal  
Chair





## Why we are here

We know that the right support at the right time makes all the difference. Family Lives provides targeted early intervention and crisis support to families who are struggling. The issues we support families with include debt, emotional and mental health, family breakdown and challenging relationships and behaviour.

We know the difference being able to access appropriate timely support can make to families in crisis; knowing there is someone at the end of the phone who will listen to them. And we know the longer-term impact of early intervention with families, such as through the ParentChild+ programme which supports the home-learning environment, and our family befriending programmes.

As a professional organisation the expertise of our staff and volunteers is at the heart of everything we do, and we work together with them to support families through our range of services. We have always been a volunteer-led organisation and we simply couldn't do it without our 300+ volunteers, alongside our dedicated staff team. Many of our volunteers began their relationship with us as service users but have stayed to support others on their journey - a testament of the support they themselves received.



## Experience

Our crisis support provided through our helpline for over 40 years has always been at the heart of what we do. Over the last year, demand has continued to increase and outstrip our ability to help as many families as we would like.

We have built up long-standing programmes in the areas we work in across England, providing support to thousands of families through our befriending, and in 2018 introduced ParentChild+ which we are now trialling and expanding.

Last year alone we supported 36,000 callers to our helpline, 2.5 million web users, and around 6,500 adults and young people through community services.

But there are many more who need our services.





## Next steps together

We want to be there for more families and this plan sets out how we are going to do this over the next three years. We have developed this plan together with the families we support, our funders, our volunteers and staff. We have identified the priority areas we need to focus on, both internal and external.

We expect demand for our services to continue to increase, so we will focus on ensuring we can recruit and retain more volunteers and understand better how people want to volunteer so we can be more flexible and responsive.

We will also focus on how becoming a more digitally engaged organisation, both in the way we work and the way we deliver services, can ensure we reach more families and are more accessible. We will work with funders and service users to identify effective ways of providing support, building on our existing expertise and exploiting opportunities from new technology and innovations.

### **Our Three Year Strategic Aims are to:**

1. Provide targeted early intervention and crisis support for more parents and carers who are struggling and are in need
2. Work together with volunteers to support more families
3. Make sure families can access help in the way they need at the right time

# Delivering the goals

**1) With your support we can provide targeted early intervention and crisis support for more parents and carers who are struggling and are in need**

## Early Intervention

We firmly believe in the benefits of providing early support to families who are struggling, both in the outcomes for that family and the cost savings later on.


We want to provide more families with the benefits of early support, whether that's through a befriender, or a ParentChild+ home visitor.

In 2018 we introduced ParentChild+ from the United States to the UK. ParentChild+ supports the home-learning environment through home visits - modelling with the parent as to how to support children to learn and play. ParentChild+ is an evidence-based programme and children who go through the programme enter school 10 months ahead of their chronological age and have a 30% higher education graduation rate than their peers.

A core part of our work is to provide a range of befriending programmes, these offer practical and emotional support to individuals and families who are often isolated and may need support with their mental health, debt, school attendance, employment or issues around anti-social behaviour.

## How we will do it

- We will increase our pilot ParentChild+ programme from 60 families to 300+ across the UK
- We will continue to secure grants & contracts to increase our befriending and intensive 1:1 support to support more families
- We will work in partnership with commissioners and funders to provide the right support to families



'I think the (ParentChild+) programme is great the way it is. The free books and toys are really good and it keep things interesting for my child. He has definitely improved with his concentration and social skills.'



## Crisis Support

With your support we can ensure no parent faces a crisis without somewhere to turn to. This was why Family Lives was set up by volunteers over 40 years ago.

We recognise that any family can find themselves struggling and need somewhere to turn for support. We know that when mums, dads or other family members can unburden their problems and talk things through, they feel and are better able to cope.

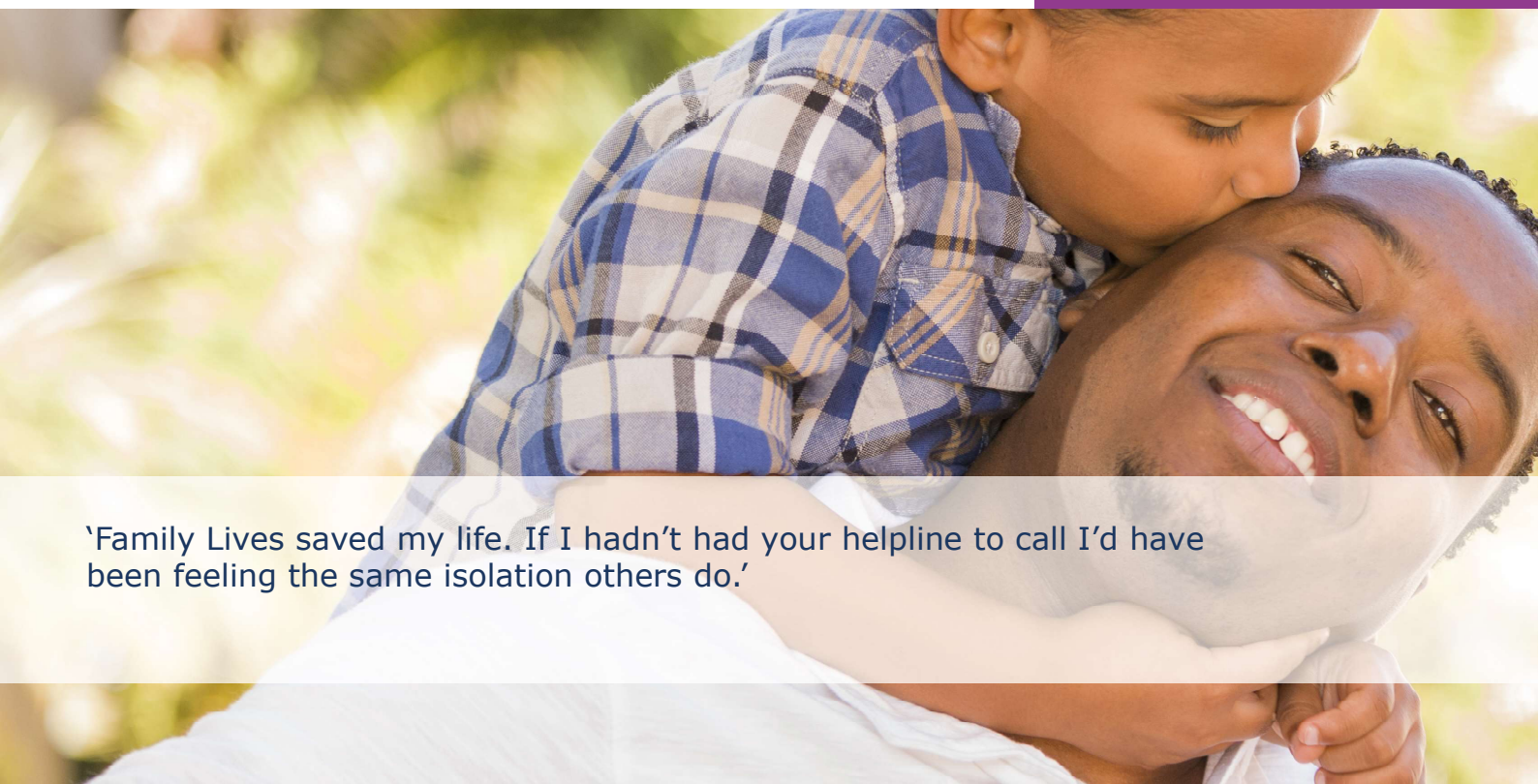
## Will you be there for a young parent?

Becoming a helpline volunteer means being there when a parent needs you the most, to help them and their family. Just four hours out of your week can help thousands of parents and their children. You could be the person that helps turn their life around.

Visit **[www.familylives.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer](http://www.familylives.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer)** to find out more

## How we will do it

- Helping parents and carers cope by providing a listening ear and emotional support, information & advice
- Ensuring parents can find information whenever they need it, through our website and wider digital resources
- Aiming to answer 20% more callers to our helpline

A photograph of a smiling man with a young child hugging him from behind. The man is looking up and smiling broadly, and the child is leaning in to hug him. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage.

'Family Lives saved my life. If I hadn't had your helpline to call I'd have been feeling the same isolation others do.'

## Delivering the goals

### 2) With your support we can work together with volunteers to support families

Our incredible volunteers play such an essential part in our work. And we're going to need their help even more over the next three years.

We will actively inspire more people to volunteer with us, wherever they are and however they want to volunteer.

We will work harder to support them and help them develop their skills and passions ensuring that workforce development remains central to all existing and new volunteers.

'It's a rewarding place to volunteer as we're able to speak to a wide range of people and listen to them... There is an immense feeling of satisfaction at the end of the shift, knowing that you've helped people, and for me, that's a big draw for volunteering.'

### How we will do it

- We will increase our volunteer base by 33% from 300 to 400+
- We will broaden and expand our staff and volunteers' contributions, roles and representation across the organisation
- We will give our volunteers a better experience – enhancing the way we engage with, train and support them
- We will improve how we use technology to support our volunteers and make their work easier





## Delivering the goals

### 3) With your help we can make sure families can access help in the way they need at the right time

We recognise that in order to be cost-effective, efficient and to keep up with the changing needs of families, we need to become a more digitally engaged organisation bringing digital solutions to the heart of the organisation.

We want to ensure that there are a number of access points for service users to gain support from Family Lives that are more effectively linked, enabling more choice for those who access our support.

This will help us reach and support even more families in ways they want by being better equipped and more sustainable.

We will make the best use of digital technology and communications in all aspects of our work to reach out to and support more families, and in our engagement with volunteers, donors and funders.

### How we will do it

- We will benchmark how effectively we are using digital technology to support our work – and how we can do better
- We will develop a clear plan to use digital technology to help us provide better integrated services and support to more families
- We will make digital technology a major part of our charity and how we work, by developing new training and support for our staff and volunteers







## Values

Everything that we will aim to do over these next three years will build on the idea of togetherness. We know that we need to listen carefully to our service users, volunteers and funders to implement the most effective strategy we can within the resources available. We want to be trusted so that we won't promise to do something if we don't have the resources or the expertise to deliver a safe and professional service.

Where we may not always be in a position to help, we will collaborate with other organisations, funders and you to direct families towards the best available support. We will be trustworthy in our work and support of others to provide strong partnerships and improved resources and services. We know that asking for help is hard and therefore we will approach all of our work through the lense of compassion as all of us need help at times.

Practically, Family Lives will seek to deliver an integrated service; this will be delivered through 1:1 services (through the helpline, face to face), 1:many (one person supporting a group whether in person or online) and self-service (where service users can access advice online through forums, videos etc).

To achieve these aims, Family Lives will operate as a reflective and learning organisation, committed to developing volunteers, staff and services, striving for excellence in our internal working and external service provision, and consistently developing an evidence base so we can evaluate our success.





## Our Strategy for Change

### **Vision**

Families should have access to active support and understanding.

### **Mission**

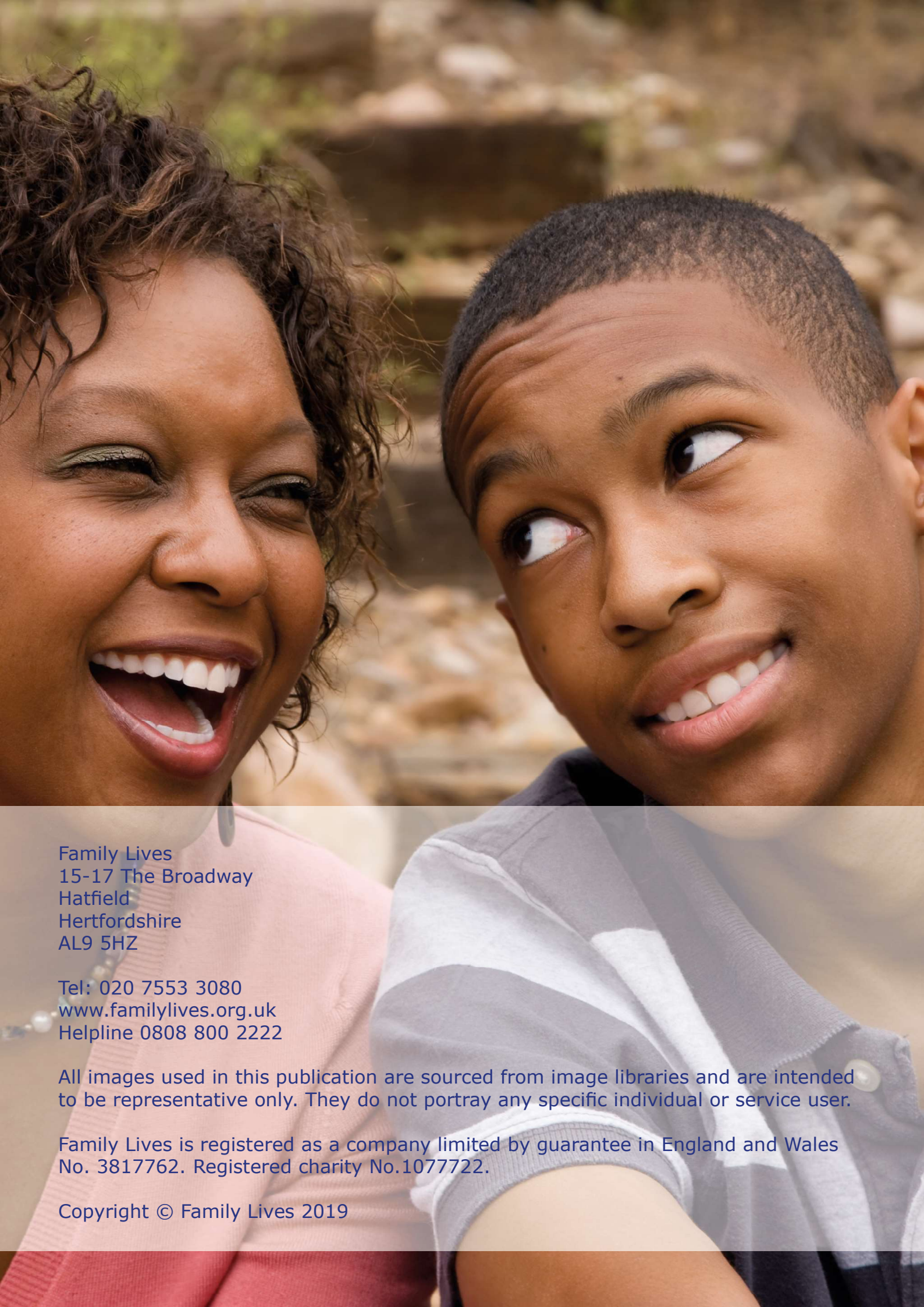
We build better family lives together

Important values to us include:

**Compassionate** – This is at the heart of everything we do - we care enough about the experience of others to get involved

**Collaborative** – Togetherness runs throughout every aspect of our organisation. It is the focal point for all interactions with service users, funders, commissioners, our staff and volunteers

**Trustworthy** – At a time when public trust in many institutions is at a low, Family Lives will ensure that we have the resources and professional capacity and expertise to provide appropriate support.



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